

MISSOURI STATE HIGHWAY PATROL



2002 MISSOURI STATE HIGHWAY PATROL PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY FINAL REPORT

Prepared By
Research and Development Division and the
Statistical Analysis Center

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INTRODUCTION

This report describes findings of the 2002 Missouri State Highway Patrol (MSHP) Public Opinion Survey of Missouri citizens. In conducting this study, a representative sample of 2,000 persons was surveyed. They were selected from all persons having a drivers license issued or renewed in the State during 1998.

The purpose of this survey was to acquire citizen opinions and attitudes concerning MSHP work responsibilities, overall performance, employee competence, and employee appearance. Their concerns about being victimized by crime, being involved in traffic crashes, and various social issues also were gathered. In addition, citizens' opinions about criminal justice and public safety issues were solicited. The survey results, along with other data, will be used to assist the MSHP in establishing policies and programs to better serve the needs of Missouri citizens.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted by staff from the Missouri State Highway Patrol (MSHP) Research and Development Division and Statistical Analysis Center. It is one in a series of mail surveys conducted by the MSHP. The 1999 survey instrument was modeled after previous instruments¹. For reference purposes, the questionnaire is provided in Appendix A.

To ensure a high rate of response, "Total Design Method" (TDM)² mailing procedures were incorporated in the survey. When TDM procedures are utilized, a questionnaire is forwarded to the respondent accompanied by a cover letter and a postage paid return envelope. After a short time period, a postcard reminder is sent to all non-respondents. After a substantially greater time period, non-respondents again are sent a questionnaire with a cover letter and a postage paid return envelope. From previous experience, high response rates can be expected using TDM methods.¹

Based on consultations with staff from the Survey Research Institute, University of Michigan, it was determined responses from approximately 1,200 randomly selected Missourians (16 years of age and over) would be required to ensure survey findings would be representative of Missouri's adult population. Since TDM mailing procedures were being employed, it was decided 2,000 persons would be included in the sample.

The Missouri driver licensing file was selected as the source from which the sample would be derived. The Department of Revenue, Drivers License Bureau, provided the MSHP with a computer tape containing data on all persons having a drivers license issued or renewed during 1998. This database contained 1,306,447 persons from which 2,000 names and corresponding addresses were randomly selected for this survey.

Questionnaires initially were distributed in mid August 2002 along with a transmittal letter from the Superintendent and postage paid return envelopes. Three weeks after the initial distribution, a postcard reminder was sent to those persons who had not responded to the survey. Six weeks after the initial distribution, questionnaires with a transmittal letter from the Director of the MSHP Research and Development Division and postage paid envelopes were mailed to those persons who still had not responded. The two transmittal letters and the postcard reminder are provided in Appendix B.

Responses to the survey were collected through early November 2002. Once the surveys were returned to the MSHP, responses were encoded in a computer file. Those questionnaires having additional comments were reviewed by the Director of the MSHP Research and Development Division. After the survey responses were entered in the computer, quality control procedures were performed to ensure accuracy and validity of the data.

¹ 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996, 1997 Missouri State Highway Patrol Public Opinion Survey Final Report

² Mail and Telephone Surveys: The Total Design Method, 1978, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

By early November 1999, 1,146 completed questionnaires had been returned to the MSHP. In addition, 138 surveys were returned as either non-responsive or non-deliverable. Factoring out non-responsive and non-deliverable questionnaires from the original 2,000; the response rate for this mail survey was 61.5%. A response rate of 61.5% is considered high for mail surveys. The subject matter covered in the questionnaire, the apparent ease in completing the survey instrument, and the letter of request signed by the Superintendent no doubt contributed to the acceptable response rate of the 1999 survey.

When reviewing the survey responses, the sample of 1,146 persons has a confidence interval within 2.9% at the 95% confidence level. This enables one to say with confidence that 95 out of 100 times, the average distribution of responses for any given item in the survey will be within 2.9% of the average distribution of responses for the entire population of Missouri if they were asked the same questions. The formula used to calculate the confidence interval is:

$$(1.96) \sqrt{\frac{(50)(50)}{1,146}} = +/- 2.9$$

The remainder of the report is divided into three sections. The first, entitled "Discussion of Findings," describes the study's more important findings. The second section, entitled "Findings," lists response statistics for each question asked. The last section contains the appendices.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

A total of 1,146 persons responded to the 2002 MSHP Public Opinion survey. Their responses were analyzed and the more important findings are discussed below.

RESPONDENTS *(Characteristics)*

An examination of the respondents' characteristics indicates their composition is very similar to the adult population of Missouri based on the 1990 U.S. Bureau of Census. Of the total respondents, 48.3% were male and 51.7% female. The average respondent age was 47.2 years. A total of 62.7% of the respondents resided in Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) counties and 37.3% in non-SMSA counties in the State. Of the respondents, 90.2% were white, 4.6% were African American, and 5.2% were either Asian, Hispanic, Native American, or other.

When examining sample distributions against distributions found in the 1990 U.S. Census of Missouri's adult population, some discrepancies were noted. People from 21 to 24 years of age and from 25 to 44 years of age seem to be under-represented (4.4% vs. 7.2%) and (34.7% vs. 40.3%), while those from 45 through 54 years of age are over-represented (18.7% vs. 13.3%). In addition, African Americans seem to be under-represented (4.6% vs. 9.9%) as compared to whites (90.2% vs. 88.0%).

HIGHWAY PATROL *(Evaluation)*

Respondents were asked a series of questions to evaluate the MSHP and its staff. Of the total respondents, 89.9% indicated the MSHP was doing either an excellent or good job. Of those responding, 8.9% indicated the Patrol was doing a fair job and 1.2% indicated it was doing a poor job.

Respondents were asked to rate the professional appearance, attitude, and demeanor of Highway Patrol employees. Of those responding, 88.1% indicated the appearance, attitude, and demeanor of employees was excellent or good; 10.4% indicated it was average; and 1.5% indicated they were either poor or very poor. In addition, the great majority of respondents highly rated the competence of Patrol employees. Of those responding, 86.4% indicated their competence was either excellent or good, 12.4% indicated it was average, and 1.1% said it was poor or very poor.

Respondents were asked whether they had any direct contact with the Highway Patrol, the nature of the contact, and to describe their experience. Of those responding, 25.5%, or about 1 of every 4 respondents, had some direct contact with the organization within the last three years. In the majority of cases, those having direct contact indicated it was a positive experience. Of those having contact, 75.5% indicated the experience was very positive or positive, 15.5% indicated it was neutral, 5.7% said it was negative, and 3.3% said it was very negative.

The most frequent type of contact was a traffic violation resulting in the issuance of a citation. Of those respondents having direct contact, 27.5% had this type of contact. A total of 15.9% of the respondents indicated the contact involved a traffic violation with a warning issued. Assistance provided by Highway Patrol employees accounted for a large proportion of contacts. Of the respondents having a contact, 21.5% indicated they had been provided assistance. In addition, 15.1% indicated the contact involved a traffic crash, and for 1.6% of the respondents it involved a criminal case. Finally, 30.3% of the respondents indicated the contact was made for some reason other than those discussed above. Please note the sum of the percentages cited above exceeds 100% since some respondents had more than one type of contact during the three-year period.

**HIGHWAY
PATROL**
(Duties)

A series of questions was asked concerning basic duties performed by the Highway Patrol as well as expectations related to the Patrol's capability to respond to traffic crashes and provide patrol coverage on Missouri roadways. The respondents were asked to rank eight basic duties performed by the MSHP in order of importance. Duties were analyzed based on their being ranked as one of the three most important (i.e., ranked either 1, 2, or 3). Of the respondents, 81.4% placed enforcing DWI laws first in the three highest rankings. Detecting and deterring the flow of illegal drugs was next with 58.2% of the respondents ranking it in the top three. This was followed by enforcing criminal laws; 54.1% of the respondents placed it in one of the highest three rankings.

Respondents expect quick response from MSHP troopers when confronted with adverse situations on Missouri roadways. When asked how much time they would expect to pass before a trooper arrived to assist if they or a family member were stranded and were unable to call for help, the respondents indicated an average of 27.2 minutes on an interstate, 40.4 minutes on a federal or state route, and 60.4 minutes on a county road.

When asked how much time the respondents would expect to pass if they or a family member were involved in a traffic crash and a trooper had been called to the scene, they indicated an average of 12.7 minutes if it involved death or injury and 24.2 minutes if it involved property damage only.

**VICTIMI-
ZATION**

The respondents were asked about the extent to which they were concerned about being victimized by crime or being involved in a traffic crash. Of the respondents who answered these questions, 43.7% indicated they were seriously or moderately concerned about being victimized by crime in their residence or neighborhood. An even higher proportion of respondents were concerned about being victimized by crime while travelling Missouri roadways. Of the total, 55.8% indicated they were seriously or moderately concerned. Their concern for being involved in a traffic crash on Missouri roadways was slightly more than being a crime victim on the roadway. Of the respondents, 64.8% indicated they were seriously or moderately concerned about being involved in a traffic crash.

**SOCIAL
CONCERNS**

The respondents were asked to rank eight social issues facing America by their perceived order of importance. These issues were analyzed based on their being ranked as one of the top three problem areas in the nation (i.e., ranked either 1, 2, or 3). Of the respondents, 67.4% perceived crime to be the most important issue facing the country. Drug abuse was next with 64.8%. Public education was ranked in the top three by 42.2% of the respondents. This was closely followed by alcohol abuse which was ranked in the top three by 42.0% of the respondents.

**PUBLIC
SAFETY
ISSUES**

The respondents were asked several questions about public safety issues of interest to Missouri authorities. The respondents were asked whether they favored or opposed lowering the legal presumptive level of intoxication from 0.10% to 0.08%. Of those responding, 59.6% favored such a law and 15.3% had no opinion about the issue. About one-quarter (25.1%) of the respondents opposed a law lowering the legal presumptive level of intoxication.

Respondents were questioned whether they favored or opposed changing Missouri's seat belt law to allow law enforcement officers to stop motorists solely when they observed them not wearing front safety belts. Less than two-thirds (56.6%) did not favor enactment of such a law. Of the respondents, 31.1% favored its enactment and 12.3% had no opinion.

FINDINGS

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS

A description of the survey respondents' characteristics is presented in this section.

SEX *What is your sex?*

	MSHP Public Opinion Survey		1990 U.S. Census ¹
	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Male	48.3%	549	47.2%
Female	51.7%	588	52.8%
No response	--	9	---
Total	100.0%	1,146	100.0%

¹Proportions are based on the Missouri population aged 16 years and greater.

AGE *What is your age?*

	MSHP Public Opinion Survey		1990 U.S. Census ¹
	Percent	Frequency	Percent
16 to 20 Yrs	8.4%	95	9.4%
21 to 24 Yrs	4.4%	50	7.2%
25 to 44 Yrs	34.7%	394	40.3%
45 to 54 Yrs	18.7%	212	13.3%
55 to 59 Yrs	6.8%	77	5.8%
60 to 64 Yrs	5.0%	57	5.8%
65 Yrs and Over	22.0%	250	18.2%
No response	--	11	---
Total	100.0%	1,146	100.0%
Average Age	47.2 Yrs	1,135	---
Median Age	46.0 Yrs	1,135	---

¹Proportions are based on the Missouri population aged 16 years and greater.

RESIDENCE *What Missouri county do you live in?*

	MSHP Public Opinion Survey		1990 U.S. Census ¹
	Percent	Frequency	Percent
SMSA counties ²	62.7%	702	67.7%
Non-SMSA counties ³	37.3%	418	32.3%
No response	--	26	---
Total	100.0%	1,146	100.0%

¹ Proportions are based on the Missouri population aged 16 years and greater.

² A Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) is a metropolitan area having a large population nucleus and the adjacent communities and counties that have a high degree of economic and social integration with that nucleus. Missouri SMSA counties include Andrew, Buchanan, Clinton, Platte, Clay, Ray, Jackson, Cass, Lafayette, Boone, Jasper, Newton, Greene, Christian, Franklin, St. Charles, St. Louis, Lincoln, Warren, Webster, and Jefferson Counties and St. Louis City.

³ Non-SMSA counties include all Missouri counties not listed as SMSA counties.

RACE***What is your race?***

	MSHP Public Opinion Survey		1990 U.S. Census ¹
	Percent	Frequency	Percent
African American	4.6%	52	9.9%
White	90.2%	1,016	88.0%
Hispanic	0.7%	8	0.7%
Asian	1.3%	15	0.8%
Native American Indian	1.1%	12	0.4%
Other	2.1%	24	0.4%
No response	--	19	---
Total	100.0%	1,146	100.0%

¹Proportions are based on the Missouri population aged 16 years and greater.

EVALUATION

This section presents the respondents' answers to a series of questions evaluating the MSHP and its staff.

JOB PERFORMANCE

Do you think the Missouri State Highway Patrol is doing an excellent, good, fair, or poor job in your area?

	Percent	Frequency
Excellent	31.7%	351
Good	58.2%	644
Fair	8.9%	99
Poor	1.2%	13
No Response	---	39
Total	100.0%	1,146

EMPLOYEE APPEARANCE, ATTITUDE, AND DEMEANOR

How would you rate the professional appearance, attitude, and demeanor of Highway Patrol employees?

	Percent	Frequency
Excellent	45.5%	503
Good	42.6%	471
Average	10.4%	115
Poor	0.8%	9
Very Poor	0.7%	8
No Response	---	40
Total	100.0%	1,146

EMPLOYEE COMPETENCE

From your experience how would you rate the overall competence of Highway Patrol employees?

	Percent	Frequency
Excellent	33.1%	362
Good	53.3%	583
Average	12.4%	136
Poor	0.6%	7
Very Poor	0.5%	6
No Response	---	52
Total	100.0%	1,146

CONTACT

Have you had direct contact with the Missouri State Highway Patrol within the past three years?

	Percent	Frequency
No	74.5%	756
Yes	25.5%	259
No response	---	131
Total	100.0%	1,146

□ If Yes, how would you describe your experience?

	Percent	Frequency
Very positive	41.2%	101
Positive	34.3%	84
Neutral	15.5%	38
Negative	5.7%	14
Very negative	3.3%	8
No response	---	14
Total	100.0%	259

□ If Yes, what type of contact was it?

	Percent	Frequency
Traffic crash	15.1%	38
Criminal case	1.6%	4
Traffic violation		
- ticket issued	27.5%	69
Traffic violation		
- warning issued	15.9%	40
Provided assistance	21.5%	54
Other	30.3%	76
No response	---	8
Total	---¹	259

¹Because respondents could have more than one type of contact with the MSHP, proportions were based on the 251 respondents who had contact with the MSHP and answered this question.

	Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative	Unk Freq	Total Freq
Traffic crash	40.5%	27.0%	24.3%	8.1%	0.0%	1	38
Criminal case	0.0%	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0	4
Traffic violation - ticket issued	23.4%	39.1%	21.9%	10.9%	4.7%	5	69
Traffic violation - warning issued	34.2%	42.1%	23.7%	0.0%	0.0%	2	40
Provided assistance	59.6%	32.7%	3.9%	3.9%	0.0%	2	54
Other	50.7%	30.1%	12.3%	1.4%	5.5%	3	76

DUTIES

This section presents the respondents' answers to a series of questions concerning basic duties performed by the MSHP as well as expectations related to the Patrol's capability to respond to traffic crashes and provide patrol coverage on Missouri roadways.

PRIORITY OF IMPORTANCE *Please rank the following law enforcement activities in order of importance with "1" being most important and "8" being least important using each number only once.*

	Total With Rank Of 1, 2, Or 3	Frequency	Total Respondents Ranking Activity As Most Frequent		
			1st	2nd	3rd
Enforcing laws relating to driving while intoxicated	81.4%	1,054	40.3%	23.4%	17.6%
Detecting and deterring the flow of illegal drugs	58.2%	1,052	17.6%	24.2%	16.3%
Enforcing criminal laws - investigating criminal acts	54.1%	1,049	23.5%	14.9%	15.7%
Enforcing laws relating to aggressive driving	32.1%	1,051	5.1%	12.4%	14.6%
Enforcing laws relating to speeding	27.2%	1,050	5.8%	11.0%	10.4%
Providing services to motorists in need of assistance	21.2%	1,049	4.9%	7.1%	9.2%
Enforcing laws relating to commercial motor vehicles	15.3%	1,049	2.3%	3.8%	9.2%
Traffic accident investigation	11.6%	1,043	1.4%	3.2%	7.0%

ROADWAY RESPONSE *If you, or a family member, were stranded along a highway and unable to call for help, how much time would you expect to pass before a trooper arrives to assist you? Please indicate in minutes how long you feel it would be reasonable to wait on the highways indicated.*

	Average Response Time (Minutes)	Median Response Time (Minutes)	Frequency
Interstate Highway	27.2	20.0	1,079
Federal or State Route	40.4	30.0	1,048
County Road	60.4	45.0	1,017

TRAFFIC CRASH RESPONSE *If you, or a family member, were involved in a traffic crash, how much time would you expect to pass before a trooper called to the scene arrives to help you? Please indicate in minutes how long you feel it would be reasonable to wait.*

	Average Response Time (Minutes)	Median Response Time (Minutes)	Frequency
Traffic crash with person(s) killed or injured	12.7	10.0	1,095
Traffic crash with property damage only	24.2	20.0	1,090

VICTIMIZATION

This section presents the respondents' concerns about being victimized by crime or being involved in a traffic crash.

How much of a worry or concern are the following to you?

RESIDENT CRIME

Being a victim of a crime while in your residence or neighborhood?

	Percent	Frequency
A serious concern.....	21.8%	247
A moderate concern.....	21.9%	248
A slight concern	39.4%	447
Not a concern.....	17.0%	193
No response	---	11
Total	100.0%	1,146

ROADWAY CRIME

Being a victim of a crime while travelling or stopped along Missouri roadways?

	Percent	Frequency
A serious concern.....	25.9%	295
A moderate concern.....	29.9%	340
A slight concern	34.5%	392
Not a concern.....	9.7%	110
No response	---	9
Total	100.0%	1,146

TRAFFIC ACCIDENT

Being involved in a traffic accident while travelling on Missouri roadways?

	Percent	Frequency
A serious concern.....	26.3%	299
A moderate concern.....	38.5%	437
A slight concern	28.5%	324
Not a concern.....	6.6%	75
No response	---	11
Total	100.0%	1,146

SOCIAL CONCERNS

This section presents the respondents' concerns about various social issues in America.

SOCIAL CONCERNS *Please rank the following issues which people consider to be problem areas for America in your order of importance with "1" being most important and "8" being least important using each number only once.*

	Total With Rank Of 1, 2, Or 3	Frequency	Total Respondents Ranking Activity As Most Frequent		
			1st	2nd	3rd
Crime	67.4%	1,048	30.6%	18.0%	18.7%
Drug abuse	64.8%	1,046	25.0%	25.2%	14.6%
Public education	42.2%	1,053	19.6%	10.6%	12.0%
Alcohol abuse	42.0%	1,044	4.7%	17.0%	20.2%
Health care	33.2%	1,045	10.0%	12.0%	11.2%
Taking care of the needy and elderly	26.9%	1,051	4.8%	9.5%	12.7%
Damage to the environment	14.7%	1,044	3.5%	4.6%	6.5%
Problems relating to the economy	10.4%	1,053	2.9%	3.4%	4.1%

PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES

This section presents the respondents' opinions of several public safety issues.

0.08% BAC LEVEL

Missouri has a law that makes it illegal for a person to operate a motor vehicle if he or she has a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.10% or more. Research indicates many drivers are impaired at lower blood alcohol levels. Do you favor or oppose changing the law reducing this legal presumptive level of intoxication from 0.10% to 0.08%?

	Percent	Frequency
Favor	59.6%	678
Oppose	25.1%	285
No Opinion	15.3%	174
No Response	---	9
Total	100.0%	1,146

SAFETY BELT LAW ENFORCEMENT

Although Missouri law requires the use of front safety belts, law enforcement officers cannot stop motorists solely because of their non-compliance with this law. Enforcement of safety belt laws can currently be accomplished only if an officer has reason to stop a motorist for another violation. Do you favor or oppose changing Missouri law permitting officers to stop motorists solely when they observe them not wearing front safety belts?

	Percent	Frequency
Favor	31.1%	353
Oppose	56.6%	643
No Opinion	12.3%	140
No Response	---	10
Total	100.0%	1,146

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The following presents the proportion of respondents who provided additional comments.

RATE OF RESPONSE

Please use this space for any other comments about the Patrol you would like to make. Use an extra sheet of paper if necessary.

	Percent	Frequency
Comments provided	38.3%	439
No comments provided.....	61.7%	707
Total	100.0%	1,146

APPENDIX A
2002 MISSOURI PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY
QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX B
2002 MISSOURI PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY
TRANSMITTAL LETTERS AND REMINDER POSTCARD

Last week a questionnaire was mailed to you asking your opinions about the Missouri State Highway Patrol.

If you have already completed and returned your questionnaire please accept our thanks. If not, please take a few minutes to respond. Your participation in this survey is very important.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

**Captain
Director, Research and Development Division
Missouri State Highway Patrol**